



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
TESTIMONY OF

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OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
BEFORE THE LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

Raised Bill No. 5650 – An Act Extending Hazardous Duty Disability Compensation To Clerical Workers At Correctional Institutions.

This Bill extends hazardous duty disability compensation to certain clerical workers at correctional institutions. As amended any employee of any correctional institution receiving unpleasant duty pay, if sustaining an injury shall be covered by disability compensations currently provided to hazardous duty classifications.

Some of the benefits that would be extended are currently present for the affected employees due to workers' compensation requirements. For example medical and hospital expenses resulting from such injury would be covered regardless of the bill's amendment.

The significant benefit incurred by this bill is compensation provided in the event incapacity is experienced from the injury. In such event the clerical employee would be entitled to 100% compensation for 260 weeks. If after that period (of 26 weeks) the employee is still incapacitated, compensation would continue at 50% for life (or recovery from the disability).

The amendment would actually include employees other than clerical workers at Correctional Institutions. It is possible that employees in other administrative functions receive unpleasant duty differential. They too appear to be covered by this amendment. The A&R (P-5) contract provides a differential for certain job assignments in the Department of Corrections.

The Clerical contract (NP-3) provides a differential for those employees who work inside the secured compound of a correctional facility and provide support for custody, counseling, programs, food service or medical service.

Maintenance (NP-2) employees likewise receive a differential when required to supervise or train inmates (a function not included in the job description). These employees do not work at any correctional institution; the inmates are transferred to some unenclosed area to work on projects.

Protective Services (NP-5) contract also provides for a differential for unpleasant duty. It is significant to point out that this bargaining unit is composed of Agency Police Officers and firefighter. The differential does not apply to those with police (arrest) powers or fire

fighting responsibility. There is a distinction between required hazardous duty considered in the job evaluation and unpleasant duty which is clearly does not warrant special consideration in the job evaluation.

The point of contention is that extension of hazardous duty disability is unwarranted. The existing entitlement is clearly for employees who are working with significant hazardous working conditions in that they exercise police (arrest) authority or fire security. This expansion is to a group who are faced with an unpleasant circumstance – not a hazardous environment. The purpose of the current statute is recognition of the risks certain employee experience in their jobs – risks which are extreme and justify the existence of disability compensation at a significant level. The proposed bill extends that benefit due to some limited exposure to the unpleasant circumstance, not the hazards.

Raised Bill No. 5649 – An Act Concerning State Employee Donation Of Vacation Or Personal Leave:

This Bill allows any state employee with accrued vacation or personnel leave to donate such leave to another employee. There is no real need for this action.

Currently employees (permanent) may donate certain leave time to another employee (permanent) who has a demonstrated need for assistance. There are guidelines and qualifications in current practices. Those requirements are spelled out in negotiated sick leave banks or in DAS policy for donation of leave time.

It should be pointed out that the entitlement provided by this bill is the “demonstrated satisfaction” of the Commissioner of DAS that a leave due to illness is present. Those requirements have already been established by DAS under current provisions. The illness must be of a long term and serious condition.

The major differences between this bill and current policy are: 1) the amount of donated leave, 2) the unrestricted condition to whom leave can be donated and 3) the re-crediting of unused donated leave.

The first factor of concern is the freedom to donate all leave. This is simply bad Human Resource practice. Vacation is really a period that employees should take advantage of; it provides a needed break from the routine of the work environment. Vacation policy limits the amount of time an employee can accumulate and the amount an employee can carry forward. These restrictions are with purpose; the purpose is for the employee to take advantage of the benefit provided for his/her own mental and physical well-being.

The re-crediting of unused donated leave simply creates a record keeping problem beyond the scope of the State's current abilities. There are in excess of 50,000 State employees – all can donate leave time to another State employee without restriction.

Assume that one quarter of the total population donated on day each (12,500 days) to an employee. Now assume the receiving employee only uses 250 days (approximately one year) of that total donated time. How is the re-crediting determined? Adding to this problem is knowing of the balance which is vacation days and which is personal days. There is also a problem in identifying personal leave days that are donated to ensure they are used within the calendar year in which they are valid.

Current policy restricts donations (for bargaining unit members) to the bargaining unit and usually to the employing agency; this restriction clearly reduces the management and record keeping problems associated with the donation of time.

An added concern with the bill is that the donation allowance crosses the branches of government. It allows any employee to donate to any employee. The complications are extensive.

Raised Bill No. 5703 – An Act Concerning The Purchase Of Credit For Retirement Purposes Under The State Employees Retirement System:

This bill provides for the crediting of service for retirement purposes from two states: Rhode Island and Arizona. There is no rationale that justifies service credit for retirement from two States. There are 47 other States from which no recognition of service is given. It is far from common to credit service from another employer under the current employer retirement plan.